

ARTFORUM

artguide

NEWS

SHOWS

PRINT

COLUMNS

VIDEO

BOOKFORUM

A&E

艺术论坛

CRITICS' PICKS

All Cities
 Glassboro
 London
 Milan
 Minneapolis
 New Delhi
 New York
 Oslo
 Paris
 Rome
 Vancouver



Federico Solmi, *The Bathhouse* (detail), 2020, acrylic paint, wood, gold and silver leaf on Plexiglas, 5 LED screens, video, 6' x 20' x 5'.

GLASSBORO

Federico Solmi

ROWAN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY
 301 West High Street First Floor
 November 2, 2020–January 9, 2021

Federico Solmi's timely solo exhibition here, "The Bacchanalian Ones," interrogates the greed and corruption of world leaders both past and present. The artist's paintings and multimedia installations caricature his famous (and often infamous) subjects—from the realms of politics, religion, the military, and the aristocracy—by combining digital technology with the most traditional of media. Solmi's acidic portraits reveal these renowned figures for what they really are: soulless prevaricators crazed by power.

The centerpiece is *The Bathhouse*, 2020, which comprises five LED screens set in a frame that's six feet high and twenty feet wide. The video was painstakingly created using digital modeling, motion capture animation, gaming software, and scans from original paintings created by Solmi. Here the artist presents an episode of kaleidoscopic excess featuring a crowd of preening, vainglorious icons—including Idi Amin, Pope Benedict XVI, Christopher Columbus, Napoleon, and Ramesses II—who gorge themselves on a whole roasted pig and an endless supply of cocktails. This gluttony takes place in a grand hall full of fountains and statuary festooned in green, gold, and crimson, as if it were a Sadean Christmas scene exploding in gloopy slo-mo. The installation's chilling orchestral score, composed by KwangHoon Han, heightens the work's strange claustrophobic tone and overall sense of drama.

More immersive yet is *The Dreadful Ones*, 2017, a fictionalized romp through Donald Trump's extravagant inauguration ball, which viewers experience by wearing painted, 3D-printed masks of George Washington or Empress Theodora, that contain VR headsets. The adventure begins in a limo carrying the newly-elected president, Robert E. Lee, Benito Mussolini, and other "dignitaries" to the White House, where we're greeted by applauding supplicants, balloons and bowing staff, before the leaders guzzle champagne and dance to triumphal music. It's a dizzying experience of metaphoric cock worship and patriotic overkill—Trump's wildest dream, and a collective nightmare.

— Darren Jones